

PART III, SECTION II

PROTECTION OF THE OCEANS AND OTHER SEAS

Introduction

Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 calls for action on a range of marine and coastal area management issues. These commitments are consistent with Canada's continuing efforts to promote the sustainability of oceans and all their resources. As a country that borders three oceans, Canada has emphasized issues such as improved fisheries management policies and practices, coastal zone management, the prevention of marine pollution from all sources, and development assistance.

In Canada, the federal government has authority over oceans. Provincial and territorial governments have jurisdiction over shorelines, some marine areas, and many land-based activities. Aboriginal people are gaining greater control over specific management issues in some regions.

Canadian governments have begun to pursue ocean-related policies that reflect a precautionary approach. These oceans policies are developed from an ecosystem basis, incorporating principles of sustainable development and integrated management.

The Oceans Act and the Oceans Management Strategy

The federal government has introduced a new Canada Oceans Act (COA), which is now before Parliament. The COA represents a significant step forward in establishing Canadian oceans jurisdiction and consolidating federal management of oceans and coasts. It establishes an ecosystem approach to their management.

The COA addresses many issues. Among the most relevant to Chapter 17 is confirmation of Canada's jurisdiction over its maritime zones (its Territorial Sea, the Contiguous Zone, and the Exclusive Economic Zone) and their resources, consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the responsibility to manage them sustainably.

The COA will also provide the foundation for the integrated management and sustainable development of Canada's ocean resources. The COA provides a legislative framework to